



The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

The Episcopal Church in Western Washington

www.ecww.org

General Job Description for Wardens

****Unless otherwise quoted, this material is copied verbatim from the Vestry Resource Guide, Revised by Nancy Davidge, editor, and Susan Elliott, writer –A Project of The Episcopal Church Foundation (www.episcopalfoundation.org)*

Wardens are elected members of the vestry with particular leadership responsibilities. Most congregations elect two, known as senior and junior wardens, though some use the terms “rector’s warden” and “people’s warden”. Generally, the wardens work as lay partners with the rector, often meeting weekly to discuss the small and large concerns of the parish.

“The canons of the Episcopal Church say very little about wardens other than their responsibility to ensure that worship services are continued in the absence or disability of the rector or parish priest. The term itself dates back to seventeenth century England because of the individual's responsibility to unlock the church doors for worship and other events.” (Donald Romanik, Vestry Papers, January 2009, Ministry of Wardens)

“Putting canons and customs aside, the primary role of the warden is to serve as the lay partner of the rector or priest-in-charge in articulating the mission and vision of the parish, managing its day-to-day operations, identifying and nurturing leaders, and empowering members of the congregation to live out the Gospel in their daily lives.” (Donald Romanik, Vestry Papers, January 2009, Ministry of Wardens)

“The rector’s warden is not in an employer/employee relationship. You serve as partner in ministry with your rector but you are the junior partner. You are an advisor, an encourager, a supporter, and a confidante.” (Robert Harris, Vestry Papers, January 2015, Vestry Leadership)

Senior Warden

The senior warden is elected and accountable to the rector and the vestry. In some dioceses and congregations, the rector selects the senior warden. The senior warden's ministry should be considered as part of the annual mutual ministry review of the congregation.

Senior Warden Time Commitment:

- Weekly meetings with the rector, if required. These may be one-on-one or include the junior warden or church staff depending on the need of the congregation.

Senior Warden Responsibilities:

- Meet regularly with the rector to review the life and work of the congregation, plan ahead, and anticipate and resolve problems
- Provide leadership so the vestry can identify the mission, vision, and goals of the congregation, make and implement plans, assess programs, and celebrate achievements
- Provide leadership in the congregation by demonstrating a consistently positive attitude that seeks to resolve problems, recognizes accomplishments, and gives thanks for those things that build community and further the vision and mission of the church
- Be available to discuss any and all concerns with the rector and maintain confidentiality where appropriate
- Be available to discuss any and all concerns with members of the congregation, avoid making hasty judgments, and avoid triangulation by encouraging complainants to speak directly to those involved
- Foster understanding, forgiveness, and reconciliation, in cases where the rector, staff, or vestry is beleaguered or being overly criticized
- Ensure that policies and procedures are in place and enforced regarding employee or volunteer misconduct, immediately take any questions, concerns, and complaints to the rector and/or appropriate authorities
- Support the rector in taking action when employees or volunteers are charged with misconduct or inappropriate behavior
- Encourage the rector to take corrective steps as appropriate in cases where the rector is overworked, disregarding his or her health and well being, or the health of the rector's family
- Assist in identification of persons for leadership roles and participate in inviting them to serve in those roles
- Be prepared to assist the rector or step in and do what is necessary (represent the congregation at community meetings, take responsibility for preparing the church for special events, advocate on behalf of the congregation, etc.)

- With the rector, announce the bishop's pending visit and prepare information on the spiritual and temporal state of the congregation to be discussed during his or her visit (Title III. Canon 9, Section 5b)
- Visit anyone known to have a major problem with a program, vestry decision, clergy, etc. in consultation with, and often accompanied by, the rector

Junior Warden

The junior warden is elected and accountable to the rector and the vestry. The junior warden's ministry should be considered as part of the annual mutual ministry review of the congregation.

Junior Warden Time Commitment

- Weekly meetings with the rector, if requested

Junior Warden Responsibilities

- Assist the rector and senior warden in providing leadership so the vestry can identify the mission, vision, and goals of the congregation, make and implement plans, assess programs, and celebrate achievements
- Provide leadership in the congregation by demonstrating a consistently positive attitude that seeks to resolve problems, recognizes accomplishments, and gives thanks for those things that build community and further the mission and vision of the church
- Work closely with the rector and senior warden in providing overall leadership of the congregation
- In congregations where the junior warden automatically succeeds the senior warden, learn the roles and responsibilities of the senior warden